

**COMPLETE**

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## Page 2: Contact Information

## Q1

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## Page 3: Question 1: Early Learning

## Q2

Virginia is known to have a 'non-system' of early learning where programs operate under different departments and sets of rules. What would you do to better link programs and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Virginia's early learning programs?

The consolidation and linking of these early learning programs can be done within the scope of the implementation of the cross agency collaboration. A set of standards by which evaluation of programs and the dissemination of information can be made readily available making each a more efficient and thereby more effective agency, benefitting all.

## Page 4: Question 2: Foster Care

## Q3

**Most children entering foster care are returned to their families. In most cases, these families do not receive additional support and services from the child welfare system, which can lead to poor health and education outcomes for children. How do you think the Commonwealth can better support children once they are returned to their families?**

Since the majority of children and young people who enter care is a result of abuse or neglect, proper care is a vital part of our child protection and family support system. We must provide effective therapeutic support for children and young people and protect them from current and future harm. We must work together to ensure effective decision making about when it is in a child's best interest to return home and to ensure that they are provided with high quality support to protect them from further harm.

In the state legislature we can encourage and adopt policies that bring government agencies, judiciaries and non-profits together in the decision making so that real and consistent care can be maintained.

## Page 5: Question 3: School to Prison Pipeline

## Q4

**The US Department of Education data analyzed by the Center for Public Integrity shows that Virginia schools, in a single year, referred students to law enforcement agencies at three times the national rate. Numerous studies show that these school discipline policies increase the chances of these students becoming involved with the adult criminal justice system. If elected, how would you address these issues?**

As mentioned in the question itself, the numbers are staggering and do not serve the best interests of the children involved. While I do not advocate for the removal of school discipline, I do feel the zero-tolerance policies adopted here in Virginia is a main contributor to this pipeline. To criminalize school infractions and arrest children for offenses that used to result in after school detention and similar punishments is detrimental to our society. It must become a policy in our commonwealth to assist those children most vulnerable rather than just make them go away. Our legislature needs to provide programs, resources and school staff training to aid them in better handling troubled children, especially across racial lines

## Page 6: Question 4: Health Insurance

## Q5

**Virginia's Children's Health Insurance Program (known as FAMIS in Virginia) and Medicaid provide low-income children with health insurance that their families would otherwise be unable to afford. If the federal government cuts payments to the states for Medicaid and/or FAMIS, how would you support the health needs of low-income children?**

One of the key components of my platform requires the commonwealth, if the Federal government cannot, or will not, address the healthcare crisis in America than we Virginians must address it in our legislature. My first and best choice is for a single-payer, non-profit, Medicare for all style program. Should it not be reasonable to make a single leap into this we must, without reservation take care of the most vulnerable among us, beginning the health and welfare of children.

## Page 7: Question 5: Opioid Epidemic

## Q6

**Substance abuse by parents affects both the parents and their children. Brain research shows that positive attachment between a parent and child in the first few years of life is critical to the child's healthy brain development. Substance abuse can significantly impact those early bonds between parents and children. If elected, what policy solutions would you promote to address the needs of the whole family?**

Opioid and other addictions by one or more parents or caregivers has a detrimental effect on families. To best serve the children in these situations we must address the family unit and those addicted. A drug problem is a disease more than it is a crime. Our goal as a society should be to get the family members help. The difficulty is in recognition of the problem and getting the person to accept the need for help. In the legislature we must adopt policies that promote awareness and make it easier for people to seek help. Step one is to take away the threat of arrest, the top deterrent to seeking help. Then we must have those who work with children and teens trained to recognize the symptoms of addiction in the family. Then we must have procedures in place to safely communicate and address the issue.

## Page 8: Question 6: Cross-Systems

## Q7

**A child can interact with many systems (schools, health and mental health, courts, etc.) as they grow up. A Virginia Children's Cabinet has been established to facilitate cross-agency collaborations at the highest levels of state government. If elected, how would you facilitate this type of cross-agency collaboration for children?**

Implementing a comprehensive policy agenda at the state level related to wellbeing of youth from birth to age 21 is both challenging and necessary. We must continue to communicate with government and non-government agencies to continue to develop strategies to optimize and align local, state, and federal public resources, along with public-private partnerships, to enhance current and prospective programs and services for Virginia's children and their families, particularly those at highest risk. Facilitation of this process will begin at the lowest levels whereby the legislature can make it easier for agencies such as schools and county departments to have interaction with other entities that touch the lives of children, such as pre-schools, churches and doctors which may provide additional insight.

## Page 9: Question 7: Mental Health

## Q8

**In 2016, Virginia ranked 49th in the nation for the rate of youth with major depression who did not receive any mental health treatment. There are many barriers to quality mental health treatment for children, including: type of insurance, place of residence, lack of access and stigma. What do you view as the most significant barrier to effective mental health care for children and adolescents in Virginia, and how would you propose addressing this barrier?**

Children need to be healthy in order to learn, grow, and lead productive lives. It is widely known that the mental health service delivery system in its current state does not sufficiently meet the needs of children and youth, and most who are in need of mental health services are not able to access them. First and foremost we must develop systems to identify at-risk children. Better efficiency in the cross-agency collaboration but we must also facilitate and increase access to mental health consultation with a specific focus on young children, especially at the early ages such as pre-school

## Page 10: Question 8: Education

Q9

**The achievement gap between lower income students and their higher income peers and between white students and students of color has been a persistent problem in Virginia that has recently worsened. How would you address the achievement gap in Pre-K to 12 education?**

We must first address housing and food insecurities. A child that worries about their next meal has little interest in schoolwork. Then we should first look to states such as Connecticut and Massachusetts that have sought to address this issue. The expansion of early learning programs, the elimination of the school to prison pipeline, incentives and training for teachers and administrators to specialize in this field, and the recruitment and retention of teachers and administrators of color.